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Twin Matters

A Family Newsletter from the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry (MATR)

Greetings MATR Families

Dear MATR Community,

Wow! It's hard to believe that it has been a year already – and what a year it has been! How incredible it is that this time last year everyone was caught up in the whirlwind of the pandemic and now vaccinations are being rolled out at an unprecedented rate to help combat the virus. Here's to hoping this year provides us all with opportunities to spend quality, in-person time with family and friends and, well, just time to breathe and relax a little!

For this newsletter, we have a pair of twin stories highlighting inspiring MATR twins. Reading their stories was refreshing, in addition to the heartening display of leadership, civic responsibility, and adapting to meet challenges, it was also comforting to "see" life continues, even in a pandemic! There is also a summary of some of the findings from our MATR COVID-19 survey – we hope you find those as informative as we have! We appreciate all those that contributed to this survey and mention a few of the raffle recipients in this edition too.

Furthermore, we are excited to announce potential, new twin study opportunities. Please continue reading to learn how to take part and try out using a QR code to update your information with us.

We appreciate your ongoing participation in our research and our twin (multiples) community – what we do would not be possible without each and every one of you!

Judy L. Silberg

Judy Silberg, PhD
MATR Scientific Director

First Class of Female Eagle Scouts

Two Scouts from BSA Troop 19 in Short Hills, NJ, Morgan and Bridget, gained admission to the inaugural class of female Eagle Scouts when they passed their Boards of Review on Dec 1. The BSA recognized these Eagle Scouts on Feb 8, 2021, the official birthday of the organization. The twins are both founding members of Troop 19, now one of the largest all girl BSA troops in the area. Both girls have held several positions of leadership in the troop, including Senior Patrol Leader, Patrol Leader and Quartermaster and Instructor. They each have numerous merit badges, with Morgan having 46 and Bridget 69, and both girls have completed over 50 camping nights. They also have been inducted into the scouting honor society, The order of the Arrow (Lenapehoking Lodge IX). Outside of scouting, they are freshman at a college-prep academy, where Bridget is freshman class President and Morgan, the Vice-President. They are merit scholarship recipients and also are leading large service projects at their high school. Bridget is helping institute plastic recycling as part of the national Bags to Benches Program, and Morgan is spearheading classmates reading children's books on video for use by preschoolers from Summit's YMCA.



- Story shared by Kathleen L. Note –minor edits may have been made to the original story.

*Photo courtesy of Sandra Nissen

Proud Mom



It is so amazing to look in the eyes of my 15-year-old twins and see pure resilience, strength and determination! Amid being quarantined during this pandemic and sequestered home during their sophomore year at the request of the doctor, they still find ways to muster up a smile! In a "normal" year, we would just be finishing up with football and cheer and getting ready to start our winter sports. Currently, they are working out at home by flipping tires, running ladders with parachutes and lifting weights between AP chemistry and economics. It takes great skill to do "Virtual Drivers' Ed." Although this year has presented us with many challenges, they have shown us true perseverance and turned every challenge into an opportunity! They are accountable for one another and demonstrate unyielding support for each other which is invaluable! We are proud to be twin parents today and every day!

-Story shared by Nicole C. Note – minor edits may have been made to the original story.

ATTN: We Need Your Email Address



Please share your email with us at go.vcu.edu/matrupdate to receive invitations for upcoming MATR surveys (including a new COVID-19 survey). Sharing your email enters you into a raffle for \$10 Target gift cards.

Point your smart phone camera at the QR code and click the link that pops up!

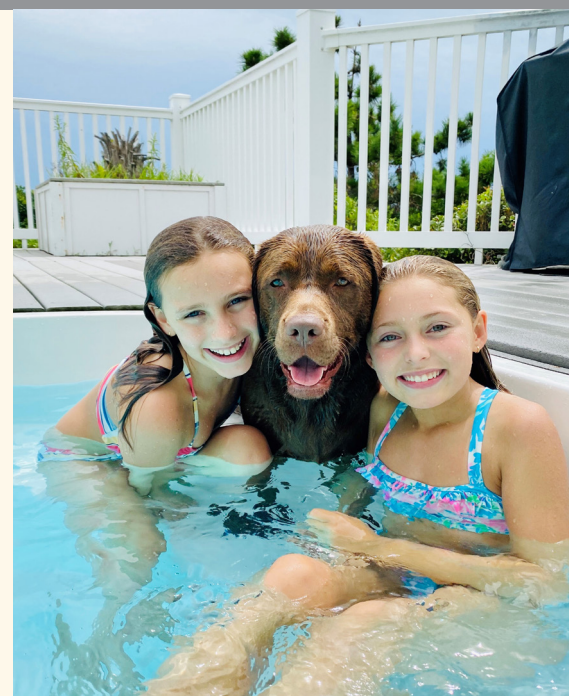
Twin Matters

A Family Newsletter from the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry (MATR)



In this issue:

- MATR Twin Stories
- Results from the MATR COVID Survey!
- Info on Upcoming Twin Studies

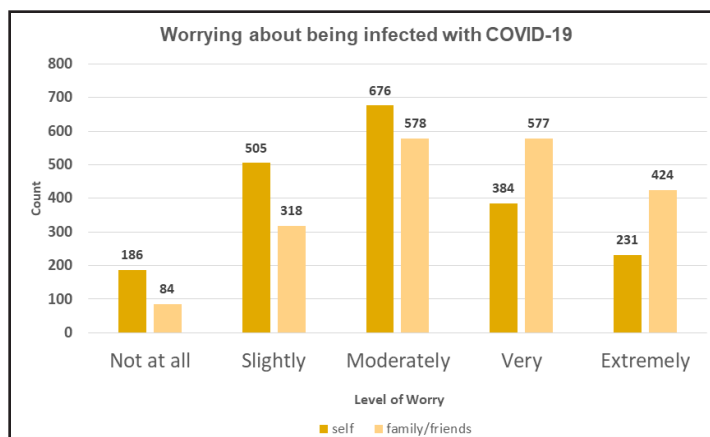


Results of the MATR COVID-19 Pandemic Survey for Twins & Multiples

The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the most significant, global public health crises we have experienced in recent history. We developed a survey to help capture what twins were experiencing as a result of the pandemic. From October through December 2020, MATR twins (and triplets!) stepped up to the plate to help and offered insight into the pandemic by participating in this survey. We had 1,983 individuals complete the survey, which includes 440 pairs. There was also another subset of twins that completed the follow up survey that focused on the experience of their children during the pandemic. We thought our twins would be curious to know some of what we found from the 'main' survey so we are taking this opportunity to share some of the results in our newsletter.

As a reminder – many questions were asked about the initial phase of the pandemic (March – June 2020) as well as 'now,' which would have been from Oct – Dec 2020 for the survey takers. Also, differences in some totals are because participants chose not to answer those questions. Thank you to all that participated in this survey! This data will continue to be used to help offer insight into how the pandemic has impacted us.

While most participants were moderately worried about being infected with COVID-19 – the greater worry surrounded family or friends being infected.



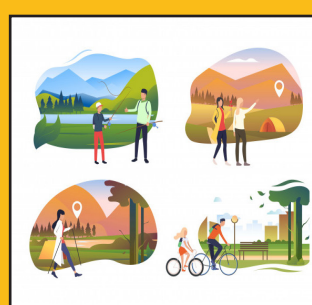
WE WERE HAPPY TO SEE THAT ONLY AROUND 4.5% OF THOSE PARTICIPANTS THAT RESPONDED HAD RECEIVED A POSITIVE COVID-19 TEST!

The majority of participants saw positive increases to their appreciation of simple pleasures as well as the love and affection they felt for family & friends!



Limited outings to grocery stores/ other essentials

64%

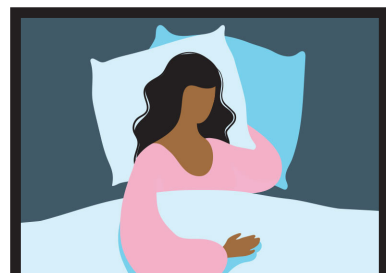


Almost half of our respondents, 49%, indicated they were spending more time outside!

Study participants shared their quarantine with a wide array of pets! Dogs & cats topped the list but it also included; horses, rabbits, lizards, guinea pigs, hermit crabs, fish, birds, rats, chickens, turtles, pigs, goats and more!



The majority, 69%, of participants got about 6-8 hours of sleep during the pandemic & 59% also indicated that they were sleeping about the same as before the pandemic.



70% of respondents wore masks always or when in stores or public buildings



A Big Thank You...

...to all of you who participated in the MATR COVID-19 survey and its follow-up 'Children of Twins' COVID-19 survey. Since you were so generous with the time you took to complete the surveys, we used raffles as a way to express our appreciation! Raffle recipients included those that have been with the MATR for a long time (30+ years!!), like Elizabeth B. and Elizabeth S., as well as newer registry members, such as Katherine S. and Gloria G. (MATR members for just under five years). Here's a shout-out to just a few more of the recipients... Anna H., William J., Charmaine J., Gregory R., Anna B., and Matthew H., to name those that were okay with us sharing their names.



Know Twins?

We are always looking for new twins and higher order multiples to join the MATR community. If you have family or friends who are multiples or are the parents of multiples please invite them to visit our website matr.vcu.edu where they can read about the MATR

Are You Interested?

We currently have several scientists considering research studies on a variety of topics, listed below. If you would answer "yes" to any of the questions, follow the link below to complete a short survey and let us know! Twins who complete the survey will be entered in to a raffle for a \$20 gift card.

Adult Twins

COVID-19: Have you had Covid-19 (including diagnosed or suspected cases)?



Stuttering: Have you ever had a stutter or other speech impediment?

Cancer: Have you ever had cancer (any type)?

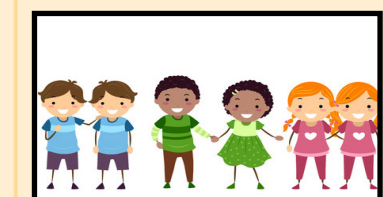
Multiple Sclerosis: Have you been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS)?

Essential Tremor: Do you or have you experienced tremors? (not related to Parkinson's disease.)

Adult Twins & Parents of Juvenile Twins

Birth control pill impact on mood: Are you a female twin age 18-30 who takes a birth control pill? Or are you the parent of juvenile female twins ages 15-17 and at least one of the twins takes the birth control pill?

Multi-generational twin study: Do you have at least three sets of twins in your family history and at least one set of twins is identical?



Parents of Juvenile Twins

Autism Spectrum: Are either of your twins on the Autism Spectrum (diagnosed or suspected)? Note: this includes those with the classification of Asperger's or Asperger syndrome.



Open the camera on your smart phone or mobile device and point it at the QR code. Click on the link that shows up on your phone, and voilà!

Or type this link in to your web browser: go.vcu.edu/learnmore